maintenance of irrigation projects, including irrigation and flood control primarily rests with the concerned State Governments themselves. The Central Government is providing Central Loan Assistance (CLA) under Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) for such major and medium on-going projects which have been given investment clearance by the Planning Commission and are in an advanced stage of construction.

Protection of Guwahati from erosion

2151. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Guwahati City (Assam) is facing erosion problem at the site of Brahmaputra river specially from Sukhleshwar Ghat to Kamakhaya Temple for the last few years;

(b) whether it is a fact that if the erosion is not protected the M.G. Road at river site could collapse; and

(c) if so, the details of measures being taken or proposed to be taken by Government to protect Guwahati City by permanent solution?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY): (a) to (c) Flood Management including river erosion being a state subject, investigation, planning and implementation of flood management schemes are within the purview of the State Government. The Central Government renders assistance, which are technical, catalytical and promotional in nature.

It has been informed by the Government of Assam that the reach of the Guwahati City from Sukhleshwar Ghat to Kamakhaya temple is having some erosion in few patches for which prompt action is taken by the Water Resource Department, Government of Assam. Two schemes with a total estimated cost of Rs. 4.65 crore have been taken up by the Government of Assam to protect the MG Road at the river site of Brahmaputra from erosion. The Government of Assam has informed that the M.G. road is not under threat at present and on completion of the above schemes the bank will further stabilise. The State Government

has also framed another preliminary proposal, "Development and beautification of the river, front of Guwahti City from Sukhleshwar to Kamakhaya temple and protection of the reach from erosion of river Brahmaputra" with an approximate cost of Rs. 30.69 crore to stabilise the reach. The Brahmaputra Board is also seized of this matter for taking up necessary measures.

Arsenic poison in Ganga basin

2152. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that 449 million people in the Ganga basin are exposed to the danger of Arsenic poison;

(b) whether it is a fact that nearly 36 million people in Bengal delta alone are drinking contaminated water;

(c) whether any study has been conducted in this regard; and

(d) the details of steps taken by Government and future plans?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY): (a) to (c) As per the studies conducted by Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) under Ministry of Water Resources, arsenic contamination in ground water in the lower Gangetic plain of West Bengal has been indentified sporadically in a linear tract extending from southern part of Malda district (North of Ganga river) through Murshidabad, Nadia, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas districts to the east of Bhagirathi and Bardhaman, Howrah and Hoogly district of West of Bhagirathi. At present 67 blocks of 8 districts of West Bengal have been identified to have arsenic contamination in ground water more than the permissible limit of 0.05 milligram/litre.

(d) Steps taken by the Government include:-

(i) Government of West Bengal has taken up surface water schemes in Malda and South 24 Parganas districts.